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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0043  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2375  
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1036

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUALA LUMPUR 001476

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [UNSC](#) [BM](#) [MY](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: UMNO YOUTH PARTICIPATE IN RALLY; POLITICIANS  
SPEAK OUT

REF: KUALA LUMPUR 1470 - CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT HAS  
FAILED

Classified By: Political Section Chief Mark D. Clark  
for reasons 1.4 (b and d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The Malaysian Prime Minister's son-in-law Khairy Jamaluddin and the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) Youth wing joined the cause of promoting democratic reform in Burma and participated in a peaceful rally in front of the Burmese Embassy on October 1. Approximately 200 supporters from "The Malaysian Youth Coalition for Peace and Freedom in Burma" braved a constant rain to deliver a peace message to the Burmese Embassy. Despite their presence at both the September 28 demonstration (reftel) and at the October 1 rally, local news channels have not broadcast domestic actions in support of the democracy movement in Burma, likely reflecting GOM sensitivity regarding the presence of over 50,000 Burmese refugees who have no legal status. The former UN envoy to Burma, retired Malaysian diplomat Razali Ismail, chided the GOM and other ASEAN nations for their past illusions concerning democratic reform in Burma, and some Malaysian politicians and parliamentarians called on ASEAN to expel Burma. Public concern over Burma as voiced by UMNO will give the Malaysian government greater scope to consider next steps. Malaysia, however, has been consistent in its rejection of calls for sanctions against Burma, reflecting both its substantial investments in Burma's oil and gas industry and Malaysia's general policy of opposing sanctions in principle. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Perhaps taking a green light from Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi's strong criticism of the Burmese junta during his address to the United Nations General Assembly on September 28, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) Youth wing joined the cause of promoting democratic reform in Burma and participated in a peaceful rally in front of the Burmese Embassy on October 1. The rally was organized by a previously unknown organization calling itself "The Malaysian Youth Coalition for Peace and Freedom in Burma." Hampered by a constant drizzle of rain, only about 200 activists showed up for the Monday morning demonstration, but among those present was influential UMNO Deputy Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin, the son-in-law of Prime Minister Abdullah. Embassy contacts advised us that the organization is spearheaded by youth leaders from the Peoples' Movement Party (Gerakan), a coalition partner of the ruling National Front (BN) and volunteers from "Yayasan Penyayang", a foundation established by PM Abdullah's late wife Endon and currently headed by his daughter, Nori Abdullah.

¶3. (C) Despite local television news teams present at both the September 28 demonstration (reftel) and at the October 1 rally, local news channels have not broadcast domestic

actions in support of the democracy movement in Burma. Local TV news has limited its reporting on Burma to international news. (Comment: Despite local sympathy for democracy actions in Burma, broadcasts of local actions would necessarily highlight the presence of and continued plight of Malaysia's 50,000 plus Burmese refugees. The GOM does not legally recognize refugee status for the Burmese or any other nationality. End Comment.)

¶4. (U) The former UN envoy to Burma, retired Malaysian diplomat Razali Ismail, chided the GOM and other ASEAN nations for their past illusions concerning democratic reforms in Burma. In an interview with the local press, Razali stated: "Many people knew that (ASEAN's policy of) constructive engagement was not constructive because there was very little engagement. Only the Foreign Ministers insisted that the constructive engagement was working. It is an illusion they placed before their eyes and the Prime Minister (Abdullah) as burst the bubble of delusion." Razali was not insistent that the military junta be left out of Burma's development process, but concluded that all the parties must sit together to work out Burma's future. Nevertheless, Razali concluded, progress would only occur if Burma's neighbors worked with the United Nations to convince the military junta to accept change.

¶5. (SBU) In Bangkok, Malaysian parliamentarian and president of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus (AIPMC) Zaid Ibrahim (UMNO - Kota Bharu) joined other AIPMC members on September 28 in urging ASEAN to expel Burma. In a press conference, Zaid welcomed the ASEAN statement on Burma but emphasized the need for ASEAN to support action at the UN Security Council, as well. Zaid insisted that if consensus could not be reached within ASEAN, individual member states

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should take action, including implementing sanctions, to dissociate themselves from the military regime in Burma. Malaysia's opposition Democratic Action Party (DAP) quickly released a statement in support of the UMNO politician's recommendation to expel Burma from ASEAN and urged the government to unite in their opposition to "Myanmar's murderous regime." (Note: Zaid's influence within UMNO is limited due to his strained position within the party. Zaid remains suspended from his party position and may not be chosen to run in the next election. End Note.)

¶6. (C) Comment: That politically ambitious PM son-in-law Khairy and UMNO Youth are now voicing their support for democratic reform in Burma is a good sign that Burma has become an issue relevant to Malaysian voters. Khairy, who led the protest against Secretary Rice's 2006 visit to Kuala Lumpur, would not stage such a showing to please Western audiences, but to gain mileage with his own constituents. Mainstream public concern over Burma as voiced by UMNO will give the Malaysian government greater scope to consider next steps. Malaysia, however, has been consistent in its rejection of calls for sanctions against Burma, reflecting both its substantial investments in Burma's oil and gas industry and Malaysia's general policy of opposing sanctions in principle. Domestic politics regarding the non-status of Burmese refugees also may complicate Malaysia's future response.

KEITH